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*Romeo and Juliet* II, iv, 219-227

The passage reads in the Second Quarto (it is not found in the First) as follows:

doth not Rosemarie and *Romeo* begin both with a letter?

*Ro.* I Nurse, what of that? Both with an *R*.

*Nur.* A mocker thats the dog, name<sup>1</sup> *R*. is for the no, I know it begins with some other letter, and she hath the pretiest sententious of it, of you and Rosemarie, that it would do you good to heare it.

Various emendations to lines 222 and 223 have been suggested.<sup>2</sup> Ritson proposed: <sup>3</sup>

"Ah mocker! that's the dog's name. *R* is for the — no; I know it begins with some other letter." This reading is favored by Malone,<sup>4</sup> who intimates that he had hit upon it independently of Ritson; it is adopted by Delius, Keightly, Furnivall, the Cambridge editors, Dowden, and others. The object of this note is to show that the general meaning of the passage favors this reading.

Editors of Shakespeare generally give very full notes concerning *R* as the dog's name, but, as far as I am aware, no editor offers an explanation of the nurse's inability to understand that Rosemarie and Romeo begin with *R*.<sup>5</sup> It is evident that she does not understand, for she calls Romeo a mocker when he tells her that the letter is *R*, and she says further, "I know it begins with some other letter." To her ignorant ear, it is not words like Rosemarie and Romeo that begin with *R*, but words like *army*, *argue*, *arsenic*, *arsenal*.<sup>6</sup> She starts to tell Romeo what *R* stands for to her, "Ah, mocker! that's the dog's name; *R* is for the —. Here she checks herself before the vulgar word has escaped her lips. Just so in line 212 of this scene, "Lord, Lord! when 'twas a little prating thing:—," she checks herself in her desire to tell the incident dwelt upon by her with so much gusto in Act I, Scene iii, 38-57.

This interpretation of the nurse's interrupted remark is corrob-

<sup>1</sup> All the later Quartos and the Folios read *dogs name*; the rest of the passage does not vary from the Second Quarto.

<sup>2</sup> See Cambridge edition, 1895, vol. vi, p. 548.

<sup>3</sup> *Remarks Critical and Illustrative on the Text and Notes of the Last Edition of Shakespeare*, London, 1783.

<sup>4</sup> Edition of 1794, vol. xiv, p. 78.

<sup>5</sup> See Furness, Variorum Edition of *Romeo and Juliet*, pp. 140-142.

<sup>6</sup> This is shown by her words, "that's the dog's name," referring to the familiar, "*R* is the dog's letter." The quotations given in explanation of this passage by many editors show plainly that the snarling of the dog is likened to the sound of *R*, and the spelling of the representations of the snarling sound shows that it is the same as the first syllable of *argue*. I give some examples from Furness (pp. 140-1), *nar*, *er*, *arre*. Cf. *English Dialect Dictionary*, s.v. *arr*, v<sup>2</sup>.

orated by a passage in Middleton's *Michaelmas Term*, Act I, Scene iii, 381-3.<sup>7</sup>

*Easy.* How like you my Roman hand i' faith?

*Dustbox.* Exceedingly well, sir, but you rest too much upon your R, and make your ease too little.

That the ignorant have continued to regard R as the initial of such works are *argue* and *army*, is illustrated by an anecdote<sup>8</sup> related in *With the Connaught Rangers, in Quarters, Camp, and on Leave*, by General E. H. Maxwell, C. B., London, 1882:

"The adjutant of the Connaught Rangers, Arthur Maule, gave orders to his batman to have his initials burnt on his horse's hind-quarters. I suppose Paddy did not know what initials meant, for Maule, on proceeding with his batman to inspect the nag, found B. R. beautifully clipped and burnt on the charger's hind-quarters. 'What does B. R. mean?' said the astonished officer. 'My initials are A. M.' 'Arrah, sure, sir,' said the rather offended groom, 'B. R. stands for British Army.'"

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### VIRGINIA IN *Eastward Ho*

It has not been pointed out that in Seagull's extravagant description of Virginia in *Eastward Ho*<sup>1</sup> the authors made use of travelers' accounts of Virginia, found in Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*.<sup>2</sup> The parallels follow:

*Seagull.* . . . For as much redde copper as I can bring, . . .

Hakluyt: 'Copper caryeth the price of all, so it be made red' (III, 255).  
'Our copper is better then theirs: and the reason is for that it is redder' (III, 258).

'We exchanged a copper kettle for fiftie skins woorth fiftie Crownes' (III, 247).

*Spendall.* Gods me! and how farre is it thether?

*Seagull.* Some six weekes sayle, no more, with any indifferent good winde. . . . Ther's a foreright winde continuall wafts us.

Hakluyt: 'After once we are departed the coast of England, wee may passe straightway thither, without danger of being driven into any of the countries of our enemies, or doubtfull friends: for commonly one winde serveth to bring us thither, which seldome faileth from the middle of Januarie to the middle of May, a benefite which the mariners make great account of, for it is a pleasure that they have in a few or none of other journeys.

<sup>7</sup> *The Works of Middleton*, edited by A. H. Bullen, vol. I, p. 261.

<sup>8</sup> My attention was called to this anecdote by my colleague, Professor H. B. Lathrop.

<sup>1</sup> *Eastward Ho* by Jonson, Chapman, and Marston [Belles-Lettres Series, D. C. Heath & Co.], p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> Published six years before *Eastward Ho*. Quotations from the Hakluyt Society's reprint, with references to the first edition.